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Search underway for health district CEO

Mahoney Resigns as COO/CFO following Emily Roberts's Departure



Nicole Mahoney

By Andrea Di Salvo

Hard on the heels of CEO Emily Roberts's resignation, the Morrow County Health District has confirmed that the board accepted the resignation of Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney during a special meeting May 7.

Meanwhile, recruitment efforts for a new Morrow County Health District CEO are underway, MCHD Interim CEO Dennis Burke reported at the health district's last board meeting.

The job description had previously been approved by the health district board, but Burke presented an ad for the CEO position, which he said they would use as a template to advertise the position on job board sites for CEOs.

"This is like an ad teaser," said Burke.

The salary range for the Chief Executive Officer position is \$250,000 to \$300,000 depending on qualifications.

Among the qualifications for the position are a master's degree in business or hospital administration from an accredited university or college, and at least two years of current hospital administrative CEO experience or more than four years in rural, critical access hospital "C-Suite" experience.

Burke asked for the

board's approval for the posting, recognizing that it might have to be modified slightly depending on the requirements of each job board. The board approved the job posting unanimously.

Also at the April meeting, the board approved changes to the health district bylaws, both under board powers and responsibilities and in the section regarding meeting agendas.

In the section regarding board powers and responsibilities, the board voted to add a section restricting the board from non-public areas in health district facilities unless accompanied by a member of the executive team.

The purpose of the addition is to "prevent inadvertent disruptions to care and to uphold the highest standards of confidentiality and compliance within patient care environments," according to the bylaws.

Burke said he didn't know if the change was spurred by past experience or the fear of something happening in the future.

"Under the whole privacy philosophy, there is a concept of 'need to know,'" he said, adding that, even as CEO, there were limits to what he needs to know about patient care. "Patient confidentiality is really a very significant issue," he added.

MCHD Board Chair Diane Kilkenny said the point was to be more explicit about ensuring patient confidentiality.

"Because those are areas of care where people who are not in that care and don't need to know, don't need to know and don't need to be there," she said.

Board vice chair Scott Ezell questioned whether that muddied the waters if a board member went into

the hospital or clinic as a patient, but the board consensus was that the wording only applied if board members were acting in their role on the board, not if they were there as a patient.

While on the topic of the bylaws, board member Stephen Munkers pointed out that the order of the meeting agenda was listed in the bylaws and that the public comment section was near the beginning.

The news seemed to come as a surprise to the board members, who recently voted to move public comment toward the end of the health district meetings.

Kilkenny said she had consulted with Burke, who said having public comment at the end was common.

Burke agreed but said he had not been aware that the MCHD board historically had public comment at the beginning or that the order of the agenda is in the bylaws.

"Right now, it is the first thing on the agenda," he added, referring to the bylaws.

Burke also said he had never seen any bylaws list the agenda order.

The board voted unanimously to change the order of the agenda in the bylaws, including moving public comment to the end of regular session to reflect recent changes.

MCHD home health and hospice director Lisa Spencer gave an update on hospice quality reporting. She said Quality Performance Improvements measure hospice visits, specifically registered nurse, RPN, or social worker visits, in the last two out of three days of patients' lives.

"With the large area we serve," said Spencer, "it's just difficult to meet the state average."

However, she said the program averaged 62 percent in the last year, well above the goal of 50 percent. Spencer credited much of the improvement to the change from a virtual to a visiting social worker.

She also told the board that hospice quality is measured threefold—an assessment the hospice program submits on a Hospice Item Set measure, information intake from claims, and hospice survey results.

The Hospice Item Set (HIS) is a standardized data collection tool implemented by Medicare to assess the quality of care hospice agencies provide. It consists of several measures that capture essential patient information, symptom management, and overall patient experience. Hospice agencies routinely report these measures to Medicare.

When asked what she thought home health and hospice needed to work on, she said interdepartmental relations is a priority.

Pioneer Memorial Hospital provides general patient services and respite care services for hospice patients, while the hospice program provides services to the hospital's skilled and swing bed patients.

"Historically, that has been challenging for all of us and for all of the nursing (staff) and those providing care," said Spencer. "It's our priority to restore and build those relationships."

She said she and PMH Director of Nursing Services Sheryl Angell, along with others, are working on restoring strong relationships between departments.

Diane Kilkenny commended Spencer on the work of home health and hospice.

"This program is a

-Continued to PAGE THREE

SMCSM receives \$9k from Wildhorse Foundation to support local veterans

South Morrow County Seniors Matter (SMCSM) has received a \$9,000 grant from the Wildhorse Foundation to enhance programs and services for local veterans. The funding will support an additional year of the monthly veterans' lunch program, provide opportunities for group excursions and allow for the purchase of new flags and flagpoles for the Veteran's Celebration at Heppner High School.

These initiatives are designed to strengthen community among local veterans, offer meaningful social engagement, and publicly recognize and honor their service. By promoting connection and visibility, the programs made possible by this grant aim to improve veterans' overall well-being and quality of life.

The Wildhorse Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), provides grant funding to eligible nonprofit, government and Tribal organizations within

the homeland area of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla people. Funding is also available to Tribal government agencies, Indian charitable organizations based in Oregon, and national or regional Indian organizations.

Since its founding in 2001, the Foundation has awarded more than \$19 million in grant support to community-based projects. Grants are awarded quarterly, with application deadlines on Jan. 1, April 1, July 1, and Oct. 1. For more information, visit www.thewildhorsefoundation.com.

SMCSM serves the older adults and veterans of south Morrow County through weekly and monthly lunches, as well as a variety of programs and activities designed to support their health, connection and overall well-being. Community members are invited to learn more by visiting www.smc seniorsmatter.org or by attending the senior lunch, held every Tuesday at 11:30 a.m.

HHS drama to perform Newsies next week



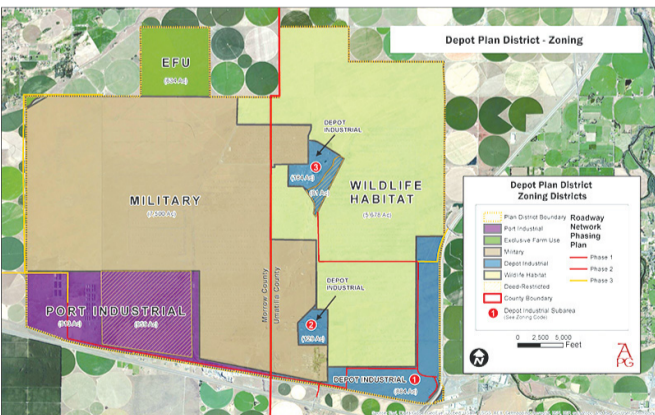
Heppner High School Drama Club will be presenting the Disney musical *Newsies*. Performances will be May 19, 20 and 22 at 7 p.m. at the Heppner High School cafeteria. Admission is free but donations are gladly accepted. The musical is based on the newsboys' strike of 1899. Pictured front to back: Tucker Friermood, Julian Saucedo, Haydn Palmer, Paisley Cutsforth, Izzi Killibrew, Sofia Di Salvo, Jaiycee Cimmiyotti, Xavier Saucedo, Tyler Rice, Lizzy Finch, Jude Smith, Rylee Palmer, Jayden Rowlette, Aubrey Smith, Hannah Brannon, Samantha Lamb, Hannah Smith, Moira Di Salvo, Avia Botefuhr. Not pictured: Cohen and Kason Botefuhr. -Contributed photo

4-H gets a boost from Heppner Masons



Heppner Masonic Lodge #69 presents a check for \$1,000 to the Morrow County 4-H program in support of its ongoing programs. Front row (L-R) Dyson Piel, Kimberlie Piel, Jade Piel, Elly Philpott, Elsie Rambo, Lorelei Applebee, Eloise Rolan, Phoebe Applebee. Middle row (L-R) Adam Gibson, Claire Gibson, Mataya Philpott, Parker Rolan. Top Row: (L-R) Wyatt Piel, Cody High, Herman Winter, Annie Philpott, Merlin Hughes and Chris Sykes. -Contributed photo

CDA votes to move forward with Boardman Fire annexation



Map of CDA port industrial land into the Boardman Fire Rescue District. -Contributed Image

By Andrea Di Salvo

The Columbia Development Authority voted earlier this month to proceed with annexation of CDA port industrial land into the Boardman Fire Rescue District.

The move came during a special meeting May 1, in which the CDA board voted to rescind a February vote that stalled Boardman Fire's annexation of the property. The board had considered rescinding the motion at its April 22 meeting, but a split vote

and one abstention halted the process.

The February vote had in turn rescinded a 2023 decision to have Morrow County annex the property into the Boardman fire district.

However, CDA attorney Elizabeth Howard told the board that the February motion opened the development authority to litigation from BFRD. Boardman Fire and the CDA had a 2023 memorandum of understanding to annex the CDA port industrial prop-

erty in Morrow County into the Boardman fire district.

At the same time, there was also an understanding with Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District that IRFPD would annex the CDA's exclusive farm use property in Morrow County.

After listening to legal counsel and reviewing the video and minutes of the initial 2023 decision, the board voted 3-2 to rescind the February 2025 decision and move forward with Boardman Fire's annexation of the port industrial property and Irrigon Fire's annexation of the exclusive farm use plots in Morrow County.

J.D. Tovey, representing the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, made the motion "under advice of legal counsel" and voted for it, along with Port of Umatilla representative Kim Puzey and Morrow County commissioner David Sykes.

Umatilla County commissioner John Shafer and

Port of Morrow representative Joe Taylor voted against the decision. Shafer said he voted against the motion because he disagreed with legal counsel's interpretation of the 2023 events.

The next regular meeting of the CDA is scheduled for May 20.

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